

Avoiding Falls

Most workplace falls are from the same level, as opposed to falls from heights. That means they are mostly the kind of falls that occur when you slip or trip.

Follow these tips to reduce your chances of a fall:

- Keep traffic areas and stairways free of clutter such as storage boxes, trash, hoses, cables and cords.
- Look out for fall hazards such as loose tile or carpets, broken railings and stair risers. Report any such problems so they can be repaired.
- Use adequate lighting. Report any burned-out lights. Turn on lights before entering an area.
- When carrying a load, make sure you can see over or around it.
- Don't tip back in a chair. Chairs should have five legs to prevent tipping accidents.
- Don't run on staircases or along walkways.
- Do not jump down from high places such as vehicle cabs, tailgates or loading docks.
- Take extra care on any surfaces which might be slippery or rough. Take small steps and walk slowly.
- When working on slippery surfaces, or when the weather is icy, wear shoes with non-slip soles.
- When spills occur, clean them up or report them right away. This includes spills of grease or oil, or water and other substances. It also includes the accumulations of ice, water and mud which are tracked in from the outdoors.
- Newly waxed and high-gloss floors represent particular hazards, so take care. Pay attention to signs such as "Caution, Wet Floor."
- Keep drawers of desks, cupboards and filing cabinets closed to eliminate the risk of someone falling over them.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can prevent falls by using the right kind of safety footwear. If your workplace tends to have slippery surfaces or accumulate liquid spills on the floor, your boots or shoes are particularly important. The soles should be textured for good grip or made of slip-resistant material. Ask your supervisor for the recommended footwear for your job conditions.

Fall protection pointers

- Use a fall arrest system when climbing to or working on any unguarded elevated work area.
- When possible, conventional fall arrest protection should guard elevated work areas greater than four feet (1.5 meters) in height.
- A fall arrest system should be used when floor or wall openings cannot be protected by a handrail system or be covered to prevent someone from falling through the openings.
- Elevated walking/working surfaces should have a toeboard installed to prevent tools and other items from falling onto workers below. Hand tools should have wrist lanyards attached.
- Lanyards should not be used as climbing or rigging devices.

USE GOOD GEAR

Never use makeshift equipment for fall protection. Workers have died using outdated gear, such as that which requires the user to tie a knot or a belt that can cause internal injury to the abdomen. Safety harnesses, not safety belts, should be used when working at heights.

IF YOU FALL HERE'S HOW TO DO IT:

- Relax. Bend your arms and legs. Try to sink to the floor.
- Catch your fall with your hand instead of your back or your head.
- Hit the ground rolling.
- If you think you might be injured, do not move. Wait for help instead.